

THE
**Final
Straw**
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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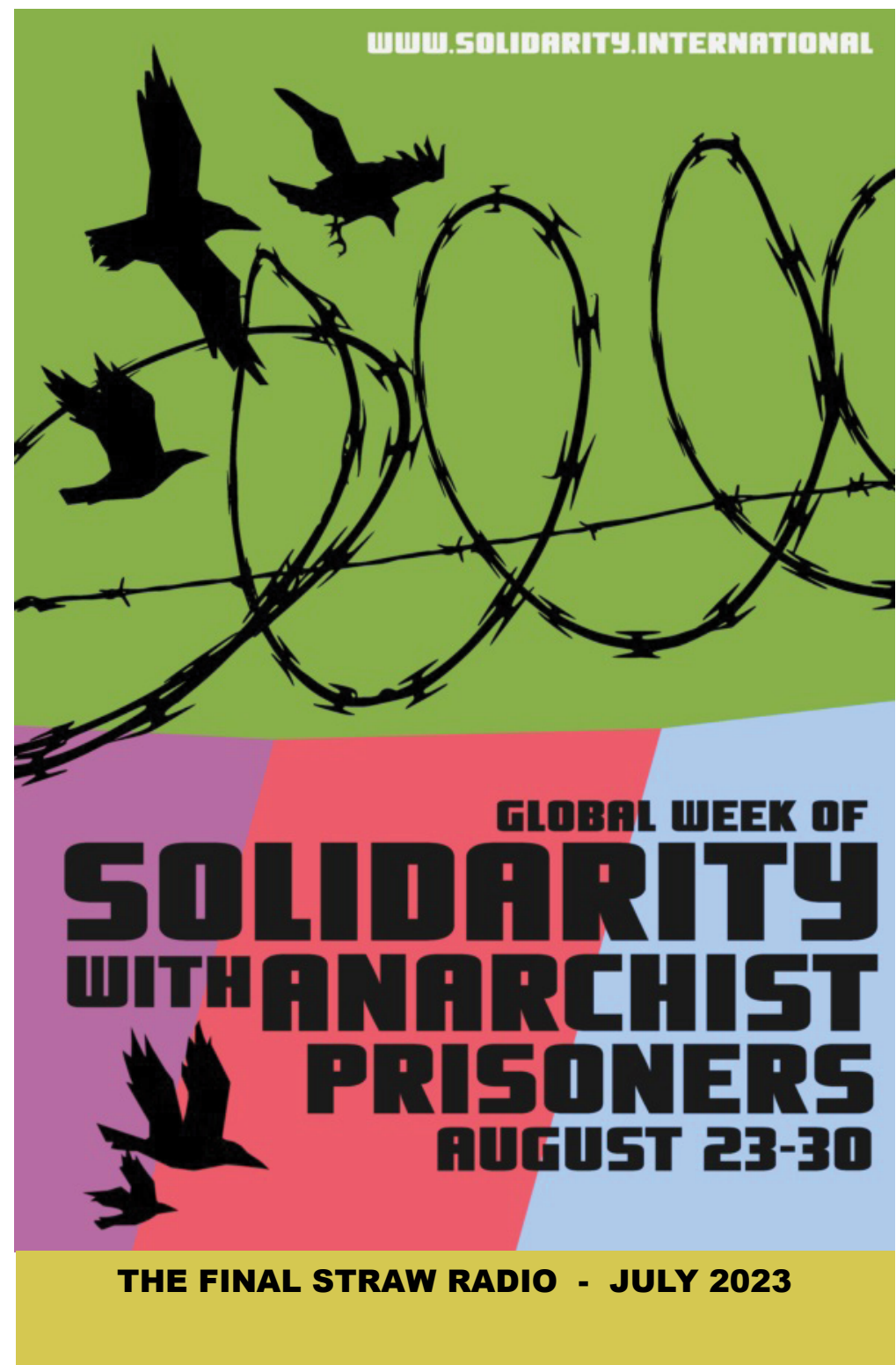
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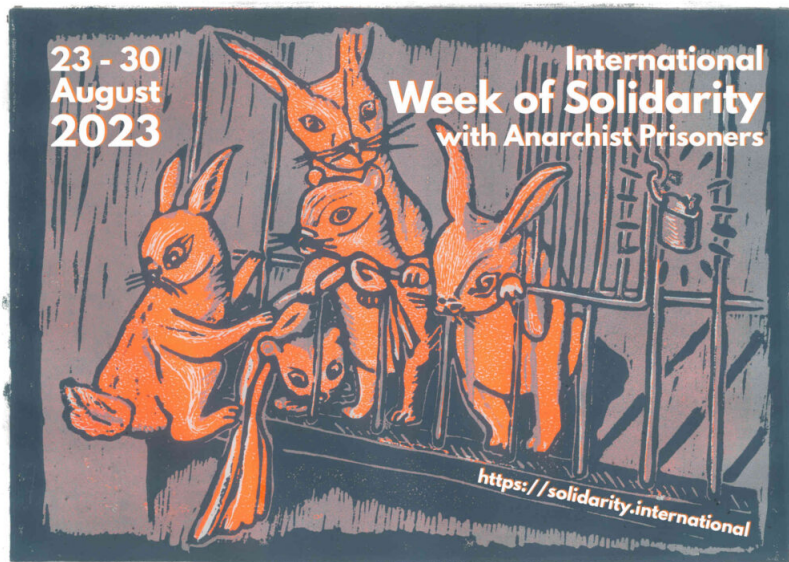
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Fern from the International Anarchist Defense Fund (**AFund.Info**) talks about the upcoming International Week of Solidarity with Anarchist Prisoners from August 23-30th, taking place wherever you make it happen. You can find the call-out, materials, supported prisoners, some anti-repression groups involved and info on past actions and events at: **www.Solidarity.International**

TFSR: *Yeah, that makes sense. Fern, was there anything that I didn't ask about that you wanted to mention in relation to this topic? Because that was the last of my questions.*

FERN: I just encourage the people to take actions, find friends, do something. You can also look for a local ABC group or solidarity groups, but don't be afraid and don't lose the opportunity to be active and remember the comrades. It's also not too late to start if people are not active now. Keep in mind it's all the same period of time. People be also active in this time in the same idea. So it's another way to be connected around the world with the other comrades.

TFSR: *Yeah, I think that's a really good point. Thanks a lot for taking the time to talk and schedule this this chat with me. I really appreciate it. Thanks to you*

FERN: I think it's fundamental for any movement to remember those who are not longer here as well who are in prison, who lost their freedom. I think it's not a question of we agree or disagree with the specific actions they took, but to recognize that we are all connected by the same idea. The same dream of this new society of free and equals. I think many times we hear of this movement without memories, destined to repeat over and over again, the same mistakes. I think it's the same for those movements who are not taking care of those who are left behind. If we don't take care of our people, we will not be able to give light to the world for which we fight.

I think it's important also to mention to realize the repression against anarchism affects us, all of us, no matter what we are doing. If we are doing something peaceful like a cultural magazine, or wherever, or if people are dedicated to direct actions, clandestine actions, and so on, we are always a potential target at some point. So it's important to not forget the imprisoned comrades, because it is also a way (I don't know if this is the best word) to empower each other to know no matter what happens to us, or comrades will be there if we need it. It's also important to tell the State and the capital that we are not alone. I think it's important to not forget our comrades in prison.

TFSR: *Yeah, for sure. Just to look back at the website, the <https://Solidarity.International> -- I think it's great that the past calls are there in multiple languages, as well as posters. Our ABC group here printed off some of the new, this year's posters, which are very cute like rabbits liberating each other from a cage. So those materials are there for people wherever they are to take and work with as they want to. I guess if any artists are out there, including past materials, if any artists are out there they can contribute their art to the project through that same email. Right?*

FERN: Absolutely. Everything related with the Week of Solidarity it's nice when they send to the website. It will be updated continuously with different actions. before, during, and after the solidarity week. It's important to mention in the call for this year, as well as the last year's, it's not only about the prisoners, but also about what is going on in our world. How authoritarianism is developing in society, because also this is related to why our comrades are in prison and why we are fighting against this society.

EXCERPT FROM: Solidarity.International

The world is on fire. The climate crisis is getting worse and worse. Instead of masks against Covid-19, people now have to wear masks against smoke from forest fires. At the same time huge areas getting flooded due to heavy rain caused by the ongoing pollution of the environment. Nothing of that is caused by individual decisions of the people. It is not caused by buying the wrong product in the supermarket. It is caused by the systematic exploitation of nature and humanity. Governments and big corporations are the ones steering us into a climate catastrophe that, at this point, seems to be unstoppable.

Governments and big corporations that created a world where wealthy people are more important than others. This was especially visible while the global media had nothing better to do than talking for 5 days about a missing submarine filled with 5 rich people, while hundreds of others are dying in the mediterranean sea during their try to get chances for a better life.

Extreme right, conservative and authoritarian politics are increasing all around the world. Some use it to start Wars and kill thousands of people, some build fences and guard what they think is their property and others use it to arm up in the digital world. Surveillance is increased and the states are leaping more and more into our private spaces, analyzing our private conversations and collecting data about us with a depth of detail we could never have imagined. The tools of the states to crush resistance, crush even the idea of fighting the system, are sharpened with every minute. Many anarchists, anti-authoritarians, environmental activists, and antifascist around the world face repression because acting anonymous in a digitalized world is as difficult as never before.

With all the obstacles put into our way during the struggle for a better world, anarchist ideas and values remain important. In times of crisis methods of collective organizing, mutual aid and the principle of solidarity start to shine. The system will fall apart and we should get ready to take back a world that was stolen by companies, yacht owners and the war industry. A world that was meant for everyone. And while our friends are put behind bars and states try to hide them in the darkest corners of their prisons, we will not hold still but fight till they are free again.

Let's break out together!

That is why we are calling again for International Week of Solidarity with Anarchist Prisoners. Do some action of solidarity! Write letters, organize speeches or film screenings, make our comrades visible on the streets with a banner drop or a graffiti and let them show that they are in our hearts and that we are fighting together.

Let's remember those who fought against this injustice and payed with their lives.

No one is free, till all are free!

FERN: Hi, I'm Fern, He/him currently living in Germany and I'm part of a local anarchists grassroots initiative as well. I'm also connected with solidarity structures with anarchist prisoners.

TFSR: *Would you please tell us a little bit about the International Anarchists Defense Fund? How it started, how it works, and who supports it? Is it local is it diffused? That sort of stuff?*

FERN: Well, AFund is a decentralized initiative was maintained promoted for some comrades in different parts of Europe, but not only. Basically, the purpose of AFund is to support (with money) comrades who have need, those who suffered repression by the State, or who has problems in their life derided from their ideas, their political commitment with anarchist ideas. It is a tool for the moment, to give financial support for those who need it no matter in what part of the world they are in.

This initiative has run now since 2018. it was born because there was the need in this moment to have our own structure to support anarchist prisoners. So many times anarchist prisoners are not supported by other initiatives, even if they are an initiative to support political prisoners, but it often depends on the actions the comrades did. It is possible they are not supported because human rights organizations or collectives with other political views. So, we saw this need.

As I said, there are no central structures. It is quite loose, decentralize logistic collective that takes care of AFund. This group of people is in charge of taking care of the request of who receive and verifies if they are true or not. Those who make the decision about these requests are the permanent donors. These are the people who donate 20 euros, or at least 20 euros or equivalent a year. These people make the decision to support or not support the case. The usual practice is we send 10% of the total amount of AFund. So there is always some money to give to those who are in the need.

An important issue to mention is AFund does not replace the local solidarity structures, it is just another tool for the movement. So this is very important to have in mind. Over the years, AFund supported proximately 40 collectives or individuals from different places of the world, mostly Europeans, mainly east European, but also there was some support and connections with people in Chile, Mexico, Indonesia, Sudan, or even Afghanistan. So during this time, there were good connections

solidarity week but it's always depends on the places where they are. The ideas to have in this list of prisoners, prisoners all over the world. So there is even people in Indonesia, where it depends who is speaking, it's not possible to communicate because of language. So there is not direct communication, because this is always related with the local structures.

TFSR: *if somebody is supporting a prisoner that isn't on the list already, but the prisoner wants to be on the list or the comrade wants to be on the list of supported? How do they get in touch with you and how do they propose this?*

FERN: They just need to go to the website Solidarity.International and there is an email which is tilallarefree@riseup.net and just mention the situation. This already happened with some prisoners, for different reasons, they prefer not to be on the list. This is not not a problem at all.

TFSR: *Are there any fallen prisoners or people released in the last year that have shown up on this past list that you want to shout out, for instance Giannis Mikhailidas in Greece is, as I understand, now out on parole or about to be out on parole after hunger and thirst strikes. Are there any prisoners that you want to mention that you're aware of whose circumstances have changed?*

FERN: One of the latest comrades who are now free is Gabriel Pombo Da Silva, he spent 32 years of incarceration, in different periods of time. Mostly in Spain. We are very happy because there was the attempt of the Spanish government to keep him in jail for more time. Solidarity with him was very useful and we know he felt very not alone in this period of time, as well as the family and, and he's very grateful for the solidarity from the comrades.

TFSR: *hat's great to hear about comrades coming home and joining their communities again.*

So much of anti repression work is reactive and defensive keeps us from forward momentum to build new worlds that we want to see and weakens our movements. And you know, this makes sense. This is how the State fights back, to keep us distracted by taking our comrades and our loved ones away from us. Would you talk about about keeping prisoners in our movements, and how prisoners shape the movements that they come from?

TFSR: *No snitches.*

FERN: There are other behaviors that could be very problematic like if they have fascist ideas or racist ideas. But then there can be a gray line where you're maybe not so sure, but there the idea is to be explicit about what the situation of these people and this list of prisoners. Every person who can access the information and decide by themselves if they want or not support those prisoners.

TFSR: *Yep, that makes sense. Can you talk about the activities that you heard about from last year's Week of Solidarity? Do people host events and does your website talk about them? Sort of like that June 11 Day of Solidarity with Marius Mason and longterm anarchist prisoners happens? Or is it mostly actions? Are there any things that stand out for you that you'd like to mention from last year as inspiration?*

FERN: There were some quite different activities and actions. Some people were dropping banners, others making graffiti, others taking direct actions. It is very different depending on where the actions were. The last year for example, there was a lot of actions not in Europe, but outside in Latin America and in Asia. But it's quite different, there's not like a kind of standard initiative. We understand the movement is very wide and very diverse. So we expect that solidarity will be expressed in a variety of ways. We believe in the creativity of our movement. The only important thing is to take the initiative to do something and remember our comrades in this in this period of time.

TFSR: *What sort of feedback do you get from prisoners who are supported by the week? Have you heard about the reactions when news comes to someone that they're being supported by this Week of Solidarity and then they hear about something happening at the embassy for the government that's holding them hostage, but the embassy halfway across the world, do you hear word from that prisoner?*

FERN: It's hard to say because this is not a centralized coordination of something. So many times you just know that something happened somewhere. But maybe it is known more by the local structure collectives. We try to contact prisoners directly and write something about the anarchist

with different parts of the world, connecting the different struggles and support between different parts of the world.

This is the basic idea of AFund, if someone has to need of this tool, they can write an email, or we can check in the website, AFund.info. AFund supports every comrade, no matter which actions they took. Just for comrades who are suffering the repression of the State. It could be many different things, even if they lost their job because of their ideas or family needs help because they are in prison, or they got injured related to their political activism, all these cases are supported by AFund.

TFSR: *That seems really important. It was always a little opaque to me (I guess, because I didn't ask) but where the AFund came out of. I started seeing Cindy Milstein, an anarchist based in so called 'North America,' talking about it and having stacks of flyers for it at events. I was like, "Where did this come from? What's the deal with this?" It seems like a really positive way to redistribute funding and solidarity into places where it may not be present because of a low phase in anarchist organizing in that place, or because of just the way the international economy and colonialism and its impacts work out. So not only a good way to become aware of the way that organizing or resistance happens in other places, and hear the voices of folks that are involved in that, but also to redistribute funds from say, like the United States to Indonesia, or Afghanistan, as you mentioned. That's really cool.*

FERN: Absolutely, it was a nice to see for example, when some were making a request, let's say in Europe, and and some comrades said they know about this because we sent their request and they get in touch with the comrades and provided direct support. The opportunity to make this connection is also very important for us, not only the financial issues, but this connection between the different comrades to spread the word about the fights they are doing. It is very important.

TFSR: *Yeah, and just to point back to what you said, to reiterate, a lot of human rights organizations are couched in very liberal terms of acceptability, so Amnesty International, I will name as one organization that refuses to do support work for people that have engaged in an activity that maybe is criminalized. You were very careful to call these actions and not crimes. However, Amnesty would say, "We won't support this person because they engaged in crimes of one sort." It's very much the same linguistic approach towards human rights that maybe you would hear from the United Nations.*

It's important that we are able to have parallel infrastructures or infrastructures that actually serve our needs, and not rely on the logic of international government affiliated institutions, even if at times they can do really important things to support people in movement or people suffering repression, like Amnesty does.

FERN: Exactly. Maybe this is also the link with the Week of Solidarity. We see many times there is not solidarity from the liberals. Both today and in the past, there is still a Week of Solidarity with political prisoners who do not include some anarchists prisoners. So it's the same, there is this need to create a new new infrastructure or our own possibilities to remember and support our comrades.

TFSR: *Yeah, as you brought it up like this seems like a good time to talk about the International Week of Solidarity with anarchists. Prisoners. Can you talk a bit about that what dates this falls on, how it was developed and who it supports?*

FERN: The Week of Solidarity with anarchist prisoners will take place from the 23rd of August to the 31st. It's promoted by different ABC collectives and solidarity groups around the world. As I said, there was the need to have our own moment during the year to remember the comrades and the fight. So since 2013, this initiative started to promote this every year in the same period of time. This has this symbolic component, because August 23 is the date in 1927 when Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were executed as part of the attack against the war in the US against the workers and anarchist movement. So every year, starting the same day the ideas to get a bit of this spirit of protest and take actions around the world to remember our comrades and the struggle.

So basically, this is the idea of the Week of Solidarity, to remember the comrades who are imprisoned, and not forget them in the cage. So we are promoting the idea of people take actions no matter which kind of actions. It could be like some presentations, graffiti, direct actions, radio shows, talking about or comrades in prison, writing letters is very important.

TFSR: *And just because this is the United States that I'm in and where most of our listeners are, just to remind folks, Sacco and Vanzetti were two Italian*

immigrant anarchists, who had been accused by basically the predecessor of the FBI. It even had J. Edgar Hoover as a member. But a federal agency decided to accuse them of participating in a robbery at a shoe factory of the payroll there in Braintree, Massachusetts, where I believe the payroll guard was killed. They were on trial, recognized generally as a very unjust trial, including by authorities currently in the United States, and convicted. Not only for being anarchists, but also for being immigrants from Southern Europe. Which at the time, alongside of the Eastern Europeans, are one of the big racialized and fear-monger immigrant populations in the US. Ostensibly, they were tied to the Galleianist movement.

During the trial, it was couched a lot in the language of innocence. In order to save these people's lives. It brought 1000s and 1000s of people into the streets, millions of people in the street if you want to talk about worldwide. It was one of the earlier trials that I'm aware of that caused this international recognition from movements around the world, whether anarchists, liberal, socialist, or communists against the political repression of the US government. It really was a watershed moment in US history that a lot of us aren't educated about here. I'll put some links in the show notes about it. Super important period. So thank you for bringing in that date and the recognition of it.

You mentioned that the week of solidarity has relationship to various collectives that contribute information about prisoners and struggle. Can you talk a little more about some of those prisoners? There's a lot of people in there. How do you choose?

FERN: Basically, it's a matter of trust. When people work together and develop some trust with each other, you can also talk about what happened with this different persons you are supporting, and you can know better circumstances are experienced. So if there are any problem with the prisoners, if it's possible to discuss and see why the collective or people are supporting this or other prisoners. Usually is not a problem. There are few cases where it will be more problematic. In those cases, it's necessary to see case individually and see the circumstances.

On the Solidarity International website there is a list of anarchist prisoners also with a description of who they are and what they did. There are some things we will not support. If people talk with cops, saying or signing something against comrades... this is out of discussion. It is not possible.